

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MADRID 07915 201453Z

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /059 W

----- 008673

P R 200923Z OCT 76

FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7588

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

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USEC BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 7915

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SP

SUBJECT: VIEWS OF INFLUENTIAL POLITICAL COMMENTATOR AND OBSERVER

1. EMBOFF SPOKE TODAY WITH ONE OF SPAIN'S TOP POLITICAL COMMENTATORS, A MAN OF MODERATE PERSUASION WITH EXCELLENT LINES INTO ALL POLITICAL ELEMENTS. HE EXPRESSED THE FOLLOWING VIEWS:

2. THE POLITICAL REFORMIN THE CORTES. DESPITE THE DIFFICULTIES, HE THOUGHT THE CHANCES WERE BETTER THAN EVEN THAT THE GOS COULD SECURE PASSAGE OF A SUBSTANTIALLY UNSCATHED POLITICAL REFORM PACKAGE IN THE CORTES. HE AGREED THAT IN THE UNE
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 MADRID 07915 201453Z

OF GANZALO FERNANDEZ DE LA MOARA, THE ANEPA OF TOMAS

DE CARRANZA, THE UDPE OF CRUZ MARTINEZ ESTRUELAS, AND THE REGIONAL GROUP OF LOPEZ RODO, THE BLOCKING ONE-THIRD AND MORE EXITED, BUT HE FELT THAT THE GOVT WOULD "BUY OFF" SUFFICIENT NUMBERS FROM THESE GROUPS, PARTICULARLY FROM THE SO-CALLED REGIONAL GROUP. BASED ON CONVERSATIONS WITH GOVT FIGURES (INCLUDING SUAREZ, BUT THE FOLLOWING VIEWS DO NOT NECESSARILY COME FROM HIM) THE GOS WOULD BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT CERTAIN AMENDMENTS, BUT THAT QUESTIONS LIKE THE ELECTORAL LAW, THE UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE FOR UPPER HOUSE AS WELL AS LOWER HOUSE AND THE CONSTITUENT NATURE OF THE CORTES PROBABLY NON-NEGOTIABLE.

--THE KING'S POWER OF REFERENDUM, AS PROPOSED IN THE SUAREZ REFORM, WOULD LAY THE KING OPEN TO SOME RISK BUT HE AGREED WITH THE GOS FIGURES WHO FELT THAT THE FIRST CORTES ELECTIONS MIGHT PRODUCE A DEADLOCKED CORTES OR ONE SUFFICIENTLY RIGHT IN COLORATION (THROUGH MANIPULATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL) THAT IT MIGHT PARALYZE NECESSARY FURTHER REFORM OR ACTION ON THE ECONOMIC FRONT OR EVEN TRY TO TURN THE CLOCK BACK. HE ASSUMED THE KING WOULD BE VERY RELUCTANT TO USE THE POWER OF REFERENDUM, BUT HE WANTED IT AS A SWORD OF DAMOCLES TO KEEP THE CORTES FROM FALLING APART.

--IN THE EVENT THAT THE CORTES REFUSED TO PUT THROUGH THE SUAREZ REFORM PROPOSAL IN ACCEPTABLE FORM, THEN THE GOVT WAS PREPARED "WITHIN TWO HOURS" TO DISSOLVE THE CORTES AND GO DIRECTLY TO THE PEOPLE. IN FACT HE UNDERSTOOD THAT FOR MANY IT WOULD BE A GREAT RELIEF TO DO THIS, SINCE THEY WERE FOREVER HAVING TO CATER TO THIS UNREPRESENTATIVE CORTES AND THE DESIRES OF SOME OF ITS MEMBERS TO SOMEHOW TURN THE CLOCK BACK.

3. WITH RESPECT TO THE MILITARY, DESPITE THE FIASCO OVER THE FORCED RETIREMENTS, HE FELT THAT IT WAS PREPARED TO GO ALONG WITH THE KING SHOULD DISSOLUTION BECOME NECESSARY. HE SAID THAT DESPITE THE MIX UP ON THE RETIREMENTS, IT HAD BEEN BASICALLY A GOOD THING AND RELATED AN ANECDOTE BY WAY OF ILLUSTRATION. WHEN SOME OF HBE SENIOR CAPTIONS GENERALS AND OTHER COMMANDERS CAME TO GUTIERREZ MELLADO AND TOLD HIM THAT THE UPROAR CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MADRID 07915 201453Z

IN THEIR UNITS OVER THIS WAS THREATENING TO GET OUT OF HAND AND SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE, GUTIERREZ MELLADO REPORTEDLY SAID, ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCE, "THANK YOU FOR TELLING ME, IF YOU THINK IT'S TOO MUCH FOR YOU TO HANDLE, THEN WE'LL RELIEVE YOU OF THE RESPONSIBILITY AND I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO ABOUT IT." THESE GNERALS, WHO ENJOY THEIR JOBS, RETURNED TO THEIR COMMANDS

TO CALM THINGS DOWN.

4. THE BASQUE PROBLEM. MORE THAN THE POLITICAL REFORM IN THE CORTES THE BASQUE PROBLEM POSED THE GREATEST THREAT TO THE GOS. THE CIVIL GUARD, IN THIS VIEW, WOULD NOT OBEY ORDERS AND AT THIS MOMENT IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR THE GOVT TO FIND A POLICE FORCE TO SUBSTITUTE FOR THEM, ALTHOUGH THE ARMED POLICE WERE OBVIOUSLY MORE CAPABLE OF DEALING WITH PUBLIC ORDER PROBLEMS, IN THIS INSTANCE, HE THOUGHT THE MILITARY WOULD WANT NO PART FO POLICE DUTIES AND HE WAS NOT QUITE SURE WHAT THE GOVT COULD DO ABOUT THIS PROBLEM WHICH BADLY WANTED A POLITICAL SOLUTION AND COULD DERAIL THE WHOLE PROCESS.

5. IN OTHER POLITICAL MATTERS, HE EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN ABOUT THE COLLISION BETWEEN THE GOS AND THE SOCIALISTS OVER THE PSOE CONGRESS AND THE ISSUE OF LEGALIZATION. A SOCIALIST JOURNALIST JOINED THE CONVERSATION BRIEFLY TO RELATE THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS WHICH IN EFFECT SEEM TO AMOUNT TO A BANNING OF TECHNICAL GROUND WHICH AMOUNTS TO A POSTPONEMENT, THIS NEWSMAN TOOK THE SOCIALIST SIDE OF THE ARGUEMENT, BUT NOTED THAT THINGS WERE BETTER AFTER THIS DECISION THAN THEY \$AD BEEN BEFORE HE ASSERTED THAT THE GOVT'S ATTITUDE HAD CHANGED OVERNIGHT FROM A POSTURE OF BANNING THE CONGRESS TOTALLY UNLESS THE PSOE LEGALIZED TO ONE OF TEMPORIZING. AFTER HE HAD DEPARTED OUR SOURCE NOTED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY AS WELL. SUAREZ AND HIS COLLABORATORS WERE DAILY BESEIGED WITH RIGHIST DEMANDS FOR BANNING EVERYTHING FROM THE PSOE CONGRESS TO CAMBIO 16 ON GROUNDS THAT NONE OF THESE WERE LEGAL IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FRANCO-ERA LAWS STILL ON THE BOOKS. (A FINAL NOTE, WE UNDERSTAND THE PSOE WILL

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 MADRID 07915 201453Z

GRUDGINGLY ACCEPT THE POSTPONEMENT BUT IS GOING TO HAVE SOME HARSH THINGS TO SAY ABOUT THE GOS). LASTLY OUR SOURCE NOTED THAT PROSPECTS FOR CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC UNITY WERE LOOKING UP NOW THAT SILVA HAD GONE TO THE POPULAR ALLIANCE, THOUGH HE FELT FRAGA HAD MADE A MISTAKE. THE POPULAR ALLIANCE WAS A POTENTIALLY COHERENT POLITICAL OPTION AFTER THE REFORMS WERE PASSED, NOW IT WAS BEING USED IN AN ATTEMPT TO UNDERMINE THE REFORMS AND SUAREZ.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONAL OPINION, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 OCT 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MADRID07915
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760393-0900
From: MADRID
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761033/aaaabcmr.tel
Line Count: 164
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 APR 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <10 AUG 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VIEWS OF INFLUENTIAL POLITICAL COMMENTATOR AND OBSERVER
TAGS: PINT, SP
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006